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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN
THEORY OF LIMITED WAR, 1945-63

A Monograph
by

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Armor

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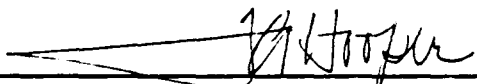
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Abstract

This paper challenges the idea that the thinkers who developed the American Theory of Limited War prior to Vietnam were grossly in error. A framework for the elements of the theory is constructed through a discussion of the historical American way of war, the developments during the late 1940s and early 1950s that brought about changes in these traditions, policies and strategies adopted by three administrations, and an examination of the writings of the limited war theorists through the early 1960s. An analysis of the theory is then undertaken using the "classical" theorists as a basis. The paper closes with a discussion of the implications of the Theory of Limited War for today.

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... as a test of war-fighting theories, an actual armed conflict is likely to be as inconclusive or misleading as the absence of war, since every war is the result of a multiplicity of factors combined in ways that are unique to that conflict and since the strategy that may or may not have worked under one set of circumstances might produce a different outcome under other circumstances.

Robert Gsgood¹

I. Introduction

Vietnam. The mere mention of the word fans embers that are still smoldering within the breasts of those who lived through it. Although one can argue convincingly that our motives were either altruistic or sinister, there is no doubt among scholars of the period that one of the factors pushing us towards deeper involvement was the belief that following the years of perceived impotence under the concept of Massive Retaliation we had finally found a way to meet Communist aggression on the ground and defeat it. It is not an exaggeration to say that Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson and their advisors regarded Vietnam as a fair test of the changes in the nation's strategy and our new-found ability to conduct limited wars.²

The early 1960s thus saw "the height of enthusiasm for limited war as an instrument of U.S. policy. . . ." The late 1960s, however, witnessed "the greatest blow to that enthusiasm . . . accentuated by the fact that it came . . . where . . . the Kennedy administration saw the greatest danger to U.S. interests and the greatest opportunity to protect them by applying a strategy of limited war."³

Due to our experiences in Vietnam, the writers who attacked the problem of how to conduct a limited war in the nuclear age have come under merciless attack. One of the most popular military critics has been COL (Ret.) Harry Summers. In an article written for the Army War College, COL Summers states:

There was general agreement that nuclear weapons had fundamentally changed the nature and conduct of war and that all past military history and battlefield experience was irrelevant. Even though from 1950 to 1953 we fought a conventional war in Korea, that war was dismissed as an aberration that offered no lessons for the future.

History teaches that limited wars are the norm, total wars an aberration. The Korean war provided a temporary corrective . . . for a short period Army doctrinal

manuals properly defined limited war as a war of limited political objectives. In the early 1960s, war was redefined in terms of limited means with "cold war" on one end of the spectrum and general (nuclear) war on the other. Toward the middle of this spectrum was limited (i.e., conventional) war whose purpose was not the traditional one of securing political objectives but instead was seen only [emphasis added] as a method of precluding escalation to nuclear war.⁴

Although this is true to some degree, what the theorists had to say does have relevancy for us today. My purpose here is to analyze what the modern writers offer in light of the writings of some of the classical theorists. In order to do this it is first necessary to develop a framework of what the American theory of limited war embraced during the period 1946 to 1961, roughly the era of its gestation, birth, and maturation. This will take place generally in a chronological sequence with attention being paid to those events, writers, and actors that illuminate or reinforce the major elements of the theory. Following this, an analysis of the theory will be conducted within the context of the time.

II. Historical Antecedents

William Kaufmann once wrote that "attitudes toward war are... heavily mortgaged to tradition." This is true of the theory of limited war as well. It did not spring full-grown from the head of Mars (to mix mythological metaphors) but has its roots deeply imbedded in the American historical tradition. The saga of the limited war theorists is as much a story of their struggle against these tendencies as it is a recounting of their innovations. It is to these roots that we now briefly turn.

In the 1957 classic, Limited War, Robert Osgood (one of the oft-maligned theorists) discussed several aspects of the American way of war. Perhaps two of the most important tendencies were the view that war and peace were distinct and separate entities and how Americans traditionally gave the military its head in the conduct of wars. He stated that "most marked in America's traditional conception [was the idea] of war and peace as diametrically opposite states of affairs, to be governed by entirely different rules and considerations without regard for the continuity of political conflict."⁵ Moreover, there was the tendency to allow the "great idealistic goals, once put to the test of force, [to] become the

rationalization of purely military objectives, governed only by the blind impulse of destruction."⁶

Another scholar has described the American style as "the use of force in a great moral crusade in which there is no room for the deliberate hobbling of American power."⁷ This all-or-nothing approach was reinforced by American isolationism, leading to what has been referred to as a confusing "confluence of pacifism and pugnacity."⁸

III. Our Bomb and Implacable Foes

These tendencies to view war "as something to abolish, war as something to get over as quickly as possible, war as a means of punishing the enemy who dared disturb the peace war as a crusade" were highlighted by our actions following WWII.⁹ Demobilization of the armed forces built up during the war was extensive. Yet during this period of force reduction a gradual shift in America's outlook on war began. As P.M.S. Blackett has pointed out, many of "our most cherished military doctrines were formulated before 1949 when the possibility of Soviet atomic attack did not exist."¹⁰ It was a time when "it was our bomb."¹¹

Several problems rapidly arose to challenge our traditional attitudes concerning war. The first came from an attempt to rationalize the nation's defense efforts and bring them under more efficient, centralized, civilian control. The National Security Act of 1947 had created a Department of Defense to oversee three services: Army, Navy, and a newly-independent Air Force. The services were given co-equal status but the Secretary of Defense was given only limited authority over them. Thus when the Congress and administration found it necessary to reduce revenues and expenditures, the stage was set "for a bitter interservice debate about roles, strategy, and finance."¹²

This debate was made even more vociferous by America's outlook on war. The consensus was that wars of the future would be total in nature. As Bernard Brodie wrote

We live in a generation that has identified itself with slogans Clausewitz would have regarded as preposterous -- that every modern war must be a total war, that wars must be fought for total victory, "unconditional surrender," and the like -- slogans that utterly negate the older conceptions of war as a "continuation of [presumably rational] policy."¹³

The atomic bomb was seen as the "sovereign remedy for all military ailments" which would allow the United States to achieve success through "annihilative victories" ¹⁴ The Air Force thus "held the master card" as its bombers "were the most evident means of delivery of atomic weapons of annihilation" ¹⁵ Reductions in the budget and a de facto adoption of a policy of total war caused the services to argue over how limited resources were to be divided and what means were to be developed. So at a time when the services should have focused on a newly defined responsibility to advise the civilian decision makers on ways and ends, they became involved in an increasingly acrimonious debate over means, one that was to continue throughout the 1950s. Others, therefore, were to develop the concepts that were to become the basis of limited war theory.

While the services attempted to come to grips with the ramifications of the National Security Act, the Truman Administration grappled with a growing Communist threat. Ultimately, policy makers decided there would be no more concessions to the Soviet Union and the United States "would, in effect, 'draw the line,' defending all future targets of Soviet expansion . . ." ¹⁶ Thus, our period of isolationism came to a close.

The superpower conflict came to be viewed as one not merely between communism and capitalism, but instead as one between two ways of life -- totalitarianism and democracy ¹⁷ This meant an "open-ended commitment to resist Soviet expansionism" at a time when the means to do so had entirely disappeared ¹⁸ Moreover, it viewed all interests as being of the same level of importance. Whereas before, we had defended only our possessions, we were now guarantors of the Free World's security.

The problem lay in reconciling this end to the means available. For "no matter how dangerous the external peril, the country had only limited resources with which to fight it" ¹⁹ It became apparent that drastic measures were necessary to cope with the situation. Since it was unlikely that available means would be expanded, "interests would have to be contracted to fit means" ²⁰

Gradually there arose two lines of argument concerning a possible solution. One was similar to the geopolitics of Sir Halford Mackinder and found support in one of the first papers drafted by the National Security Council (NSC) in March of 1948. This document stressed that the Eurasian "heartland" contained areas of potential strength that, if added to Soviet holdings, would make them vastly superior to the West in manpower and resources. Eight months later, this philosophy was formally expressed in NSC 20/4.²¹ The assumption that Europe was the most critical link in the chain of American defenses was to remain at the heart of American security debates throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

The second line of argument was concerned with how to defend the interests of the United States while containing the influence of the Soviet Union. George Kennan stressed the need to distinguish between vital and peripheral interests. Rather than attempting to defend the entire world, Kennan felt that the United States should secure her interests by concentrating on denying certain areas of the world to the Soviets. The controversy over which concept of security to adopt, a choice between a "strongpoint" as opposed to a "perimeter" defense, was to shape much of the discussion of national security issues over the next two decades.²²

Two other elements of the strongpoint concept are noteworthy. Central to it was a traditional perception of the means available to the United States. One of the most persistent [American] ideas had been that of using economic and technological resources, but not manpower, to maintain the balance of power overseas.²³ Non-military elements of power were to play the dominant role. Yet another aspect was its European orientation as Mackinder's "heartland" remained the focus.

As the Truman administration was in the process of refining and choosing between these concepts, several events took place that caused a shift in the debate over national security. In 1949, mainland China finally fell to the victorious forces of the Communist Chinese. The previous concept of the struggle as one between totalitarianism and democracy was now to become more narrowed to a struggle with Communism. The implication of the fall

of China "was that adversaries, like interests, were indivisible, that when any nation went communist, regardless of its geographic location or strategic potential, American security was lessened thereby." 24

Another event was the famed "Revolt of the Admirals" that occurred when senior naval officers publicly objected to the cancellation of the Navy's planned supercarrier. 25 At the Congressional hearings that followed the outcry, Admiral Arthur Radford called the Air Force B36 strategic bomber a blunder and attacked the Air Force concentration on atomic annihilation as a means to an end. Radford felt that in "planning to wage war we must look to the peace to follow. . . . A war of annihilation might possibly bring a Pyrrhic military victory but it would be politically and economically senseless." The effect of this interservice battle was "to call the strategic debate back to fundamental issues." 26

The most threatening event was the Soviets' "unexpectedly early detonation of an atomic bomb in August 1949." This set off a discussion in Washington over whether or not to respond by building the hydrogen bomb, a more powerful implement of destruction. 27 Secretary of State Dean Acheson suggested that a reevaluation of the nation's military and foreign policy be conducted within the context of this question. The product of this reexamination was to become known as NSC-68, a landmark document in American security policy.

The basis of American defense policy had been established, however. Containment was the goal, Europe the key. Due to the pressures of the time and our traditional outlook on war, we began to view the Communist threat as one that was coalescing throughout the world and something that needed to be resisted with whatever means were available. Means to be employed were perceived to be limited, however, due to economic reasons and the traditional American distaste for a large military. This was reflected in a desire to use our technological advantage to the fullest, exploiting the edge that the atomic bomb gave us. It became, in fact, the centerpiece of American military strategy.

IV. NSC-68 and the Great Catalyst

NSC-68 reflected the administration's attitudes about the world and in a logical fashion laid out the assumptions underlying the framers' world view. At the same time, it developed a course of action for the government to follow to meet the challenges it faced. Due to the events described above, "it became evident... in Washington that both our past military-political doctrine and the concrete efforts we were making in support of that doctrine were grossly inadequate."²⁸ More importantly, "there was a feeling that the United States was losing the peace."²⁹ The reevaluation of American defense policy thus took place in an atmosphere of crisis requiring a detailed look at the basis for our policy. Since the drafting of NSC-68 was kept free of particulars (in terms of costs and force requirements) "the drafters were... able to concentrate on general considerations of strategy" instead of being "overwhelmed with details about means, to the complete exclusion of any systematic treatment of ends and their relationship to means."³⁰

Crucial to NSC-68's conclusions were the assumptions underlying the analysis. "That the principle challenge and danger came from the Kremlin was not in doubt."³¹ Yet NSC-68 was to shift "perceptions of the threat from the Soviet Union to the international communist movement..."³² The framers of the document foresaw "a danger of limited war, of Communist military adventures... to expand the periphery of the Communist domains, limited enough that an American riposte of atomic annihilation would be disproportionate in both morality and expediency."³³ The Soviet atomic challenge thus threatened to upset a "balance of power" that was "delicately poised" and it was estimated that "a nuclear stalemate between the United States and the Soviet Union would be reached" by 1954.³⁴ What the United States required, therefore, was an expansion of means.³⁵ In order to accomplish this NSC-68 had to "systematize containment, and... find the means to make it work."

The drafters sought to determine how the United States could "create a military balance which would employ military strength... to deter combat, and yet achieve the national policy objectives..."³⁶ Although the most important issue was whether to build a

hydrogen bomb, the underlying question was: "what should the United States do to avoid complete reliance upon nuclear weapons?"³⁷ The conclusion was that the United States must,

By means of a rapid and sustained buildup of the political, economic, and military strength of the free world, and by means of an affirmative program intended to wrest the initiative from the Soviet Union confront it with convincing evidence of the determination and ability of the free world to frustrate the Kremlin design of a world dominated by its will. . . . the cold war is in fact a real war in which the survival of the free world is at stake.³⁸

One of the major aspects of this buildup was to be an increase in the size of the United States armed forces and the variety of military means available to decision makers. The "disagreements holding back NSC-68's chances of acceptance were not with its premises but with the conclusion that containment of Communism necessarily entailed a diversified and expensive military program."³⁹ Given this unresolved major issue, the effects of NSC-68 were predicted to be slight.

Fortuitously for the framers of the document, the North Koreans invaded South Korea only a few months after the NSC had completed its work. Thus, the "Korean War rescued NSC-68 from oblivion and made it the foundation of the American strategy after all."⁴⁰ This limited conflict "appeared to validate several of NSC-68's most important conclusions . . . and reinforced [its] argument that existing U.S. forces were inadequate, atomic weapons alone would not deter limited aggression, and Washington lacked the conventional means necessary to cover all contingencies."⁴¹

For the first time, "statesmen and generals suddenly found themselves obliged to effect a re-examination of mutual strategy."⁴² This discussion was not limited to the upper layers of government, however. The war "brought home dramatically to the American public and American policy maker the possibility of engaging in military clashes with the Soviet bloc which would not resemble World War II. . . . In 1951 . . . the American people were presented with their first full-scale debate as to the acceptability of limiting warfare."⁴³

One of the most fundamental assumptions about the conduct of a war with American involvement was now brought into question. As Arnold Wolfers wrote, "until quite recently most people who paid attention to the problem took it for granted that the time had come when all wars would be fought without restraint or limitation."⁴⁴ Since "the Korean War did not turn out that way... it seemed to baffle us completely." The danger existed, however, that so long as Americans felt that any war which brought the Soviet Union and the United States into direct and open conflict must be total... preparatory measures [will] be adopted which ensure that the opening of hostilities does in fact precipitate total war."⁴⁵ The energies of the decision-makers involved turned to different activities based on their positions: the divisive debate within the military concerning means to be employed continued; the Administration attempted to devise policies that would avoid our involvement in such conflicts, and theorists focused on the ways to conduct limited war.

There was a widespread perception that the effort at unification had failed. Instead of cohesion and efficiency "the actual result [had]... been 'triplication' for it created a separate Air Force and... [had] not provided the clear-cut decisions on major interservice differences which... [were] required to weld the three services into a single defense establishment, working toward defined objectives."⁴⁶ The services, therefore, continued unabated the debate on means -- and to a limited extent, ways -- to the exclusion of ends.

The results of the Korean War also energized the strategy intellectuals. Even so, the true "catalyst which stimulated a great deal of thinking and writing about the problems of limited war" was the speech given by Secretary of State John Dulles in January of 1954 when the strategy of Massive Retaliation was announced. "In criticizing the doctrine... analysts were forced to spell out their objections... and to grope for an alternative strategy for dealing with local aggression."⁴⁷ Thus began the questioning of our most cherished assumptions about war.

What were the "lessons" drawn from Korea that "remain a part of our intellectual baggage"?⁴⁸ Perhaps the most important, and the most difficult to cope with, was the

identification of what William Kaufmann referred to as "constraints upon accustomed behavior." In his view:

All the emotions traditionally associated with war must be inhibited. We are flung into a strait jacket of rationality which prevents us from lashing out at the enemy. We are asked to make sacrifices and then to cheer lustily for a tie in a game that we did not even ask to play. On the military side, the emotional cost can be minimized somewhat by the practice of rotating troops. On the civilian side, avoidance of unnecessary dislocation to the domestic society combined with careful and authoritative explanations of the alternatives to limited war are perhaps the only recourses available. That they will by no means eliminate dissatisfaction with so unorthodox a war may, however, redound to our benefit. For it will be just as well for the enemy to realize that, despite our best efforts at control, our patience is not exhaustible.⁴⁹

Another, and more dubious lesson, was that "still thinking in terms of total victories or total defeats, after the winter of 1950-51 the United States thought that stalemate was the only alternative to total war."⁵⁰ It also "demonstrated conspicuously some of the major constraints necessary to keeping a war limited -- above all, a willingness to settle for goals representing a considerable degree of compromise with the enemy, and thus readiness to keep contact with him and to enter into and maintain negotiations with him."⁵¹

One issue highlighted by the war was hotly debated until the late 1950's. Russell Weigley has written that "the Korean experience suggested that it was not capacity for mobilization that counted most, but rather the state of readiness" and, even more important "for conventional surface strength in readiness."⁵² By 1960, however, one lesson that had been taken away was reflected by Herman Kahn in a RAND report:

What deters the Russians from a series of Koreas and Indochinas? It is probably less the fear of a direct U.S. attack with its current forces than the probability that the United States and her allies would greatly increase both their military strength and their resolve in response to such crises. . . . For example, in June, 1950, the United States was engaged in a great debate on whether the defense budget should be 14, 15, or 16 billion dollars. Along came Korea. Congress quickly authorized 60 billion dollars, an increase by a factor of four!

It is important to understand that we have this asset: the ability to spend large sums of money rapidly.⁵³

Our ability to mobilize large forces rapidly thus appeared to be a strength yet the question of how much conventional force strength "in being" was required remained

unanswered. Although there was a great deal of discussion concerning how to correct deficiencies in our mobilization structure, the government gradually turned away from the strategy of fighting a prolonged war. The "New Look" was thought to be the answer strategists were seeking; one that accommodated the "new realities."

Although America had "dabbled" in the realm of limited war theory, it had not continued to any great depth. Glacial, yet important changes, had occurred in the space of four years, however. Isolationism was consigned to the past as the United States realized it must follow a different path. The Free World, of which the United States was the de facto leader, was perceived to be engaged in a life-or-death struggle, albeit a non-traditional one with a monolithic Communism as an antagonist. Yet the question of what means could best be used to contain this beast was still an unresolved issue.

V. The New Look -- A Draconian Solution?

The policy of containment remained the national policy under the incoming Eisenhower Administration. The country's national strategy changed to one referred to as the "New Look."⁵⁴ Unfortunately, one aspect of the New Look, our military strategy, has received the most attention not only from historians but critics at the time as well. This was the strategy of Massive Retaliation, a strategy shaped by pressures in the political, domestic, and economic spheres.

Eisenhower came into office with many fixed ideas. Ingrained within him was Clausewitz' argument that the military should be the servant of politics and that, "in politics as well as in war, means had to be subordinated to ends . . ."⁵⁵ Moreover, Eisenhower viewed the means available for use to secure our national objectives as being limited. He firmly believed "that the national economy could not support indefinite military expenditures at levels necessary to contain conventional forces." Based on these predispositions, the possible options open to the United States were "economic and military assistance to local [indigenous] forces, and [reliance] upon the deterrent threat of American air and naval power . . . to achieve objectives . . ."⁵⁶

More crucial were some of Eisenhower's assumptions concerning the world order. In a traditionally American fashion, Eisenhower adopted the slogan "there is no alternative to peace."⁵⁷ War and peace were things apart -- the country was either engaged in a struggle in which all of its resources were to be committed, or it was not. This was "an impractical policy," and along with Massive Retaliation, "all or none statements inapplicable to the real world." ⁵⁸

Eisenhower also perceived American interests to be of a global nature. Like the authors of NSC-68, Eisenhower "believed the world balance of power to be so delicately poised that no further victories for communism anywhere could be tolerated without upsetting it." In his words, "as there is no weapon too small, no arena too remote, to be ignored, there is no free nation too humble to be forgotten."⁵⁹ The concept of a "perimeter" as opposed to the "strongpoint" method of containment was thus adopted.

Public attitudes toward the war in Korea limited the measures Eisenhower could take as well. Voter discontent with the Korean war put the Republicans into office and the new administration intended both to extricate the country from the Korean entanglement and to ensure against similar involvements.⁶⁰ The major components of the New Look would enable Eisenhower to work around this distaste for ground combat as it was to combine "nuclear deterrence, alliances, psychological warfare, covert actions, and negotiations," all of which promised to be cheaper in dollar and human cost than did the prescriptions of NSC-68.⁶¹

Within this national strategy, "the central idea was that of asymmetrical response -- of reacting to adversary challenges in ways calculated to apply one's own strengths against the other sides' weaknesses."⁶² This would, it was hoped, "open up a range of possible responses so wide that the adversary would not be able to count on retaining the initiative, lacking that, it was thought, he would come to see the risks of aggression as outweighing the benefits."⁶³ Moreover, it "implied a willingness to shift the nature and location of competition from the site of the original provocation." ⁶⁴ In order to accomplish this at a

tolerable cost (for the economic capability of the nation was the over-riding consideration) nuclear weaponry would form the basis of our military strategy.

Several critical policy documents developed by the Eisenhower Administration emerged after the Korean War that affected the structure of the military. The first, NSC 162, was produced in May of 1953 and helped define the boundaries of the new strategy by calling for a continuance of containment, but with greater reliance on strategic air power as the means of implementing the policy.⁶⁵ The Sequoia Plan, advanced by the Joint Chiefs of Staff looked to "a money-saving deemphasis of conventional forces through reduction of overseas garrisons and creation of a mobile strategic reserve in the United States, also with greater reliance on allied forces for local defense." By the time NSC 162/2 was released in October of 1953, it had been determined that the military "were to plan to use nuclear weapons whenever their use was militarily desirable."⁶⁶

The lion's share of this burden was to be borne by the Air Force and Navy, for it did not appear that the Army had a role in an atomic war. Fissionable materials were limited, so weapons were restricted to larger yields. The Army was hampered by a lack of vision as well. Even though there were enormous theoretical difficulties involved in producing small yield weapons, the Army failed to identify and develop requirements for them. Moreover, when the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations, tried to convince field commanders that there was a need for these weapons, he was ignored. Those that were developed came from aggressive programs run by the Atomic Energy Commission which were "expanding weapon capabilities faster than the military establishment was approving military characteristics and requirements of atomic weapons."⁶⁷ The Air Force, therefore, remained Eisenhower's "big stick."

All of these disparate threads came together to form the military strategy known as Massive Retaliation. This term came to life in a speech given by Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Dulles, on January 12, 1954. At this time he stated that "no local defense will alone contain the mighty manpower of the Communist world. . . [it] must be reinforced by

massive retaliatory power."⁶⁸ What was implied was not a rejection of that aspect of the New Look that stressed these forces. "Rather the Administration was saying that it was not prepared to support local-war forces large enough to deal with all possible aggressive acts of the Sino-Soviet bloc. Therefore local ground defense had to be reinforced by the threat to use America's strategic nuclear power."⁶⁹

The hue and cry over this pronouncement was immediate and extensive. One commentator wrote that

It seemed almost inconceivable that at the very moment when the loss of our atomic monopoly was becoming an actuality, Mr. Dulles should announce in blatant and offensive terms what he claimed was a new doctrine, the doctrine of depending "primarily upon a great capacity to retaliate, instantly, by means and at places of our choosing."⁷⁰

To many, this was "placing the cart before the horse. . . . Military strategy and force structure should be designed to support the defense needs of the nation-- not vice versa. The development should proceed from theater appraisal to strategy to forces. A reverse progression could end in chaos."⁷¹ The result, as manifested in the form of Massive Retaliation, appeared to be "a single draconian solution."⁷²

VI. The Great Debate

The next several years saw the development of what one writer at the time called the "Great Debate on military doctrine." Massive Retaliation came under fire for a variety of reasons, but the most vehemently attacked aspects of it were an underlying (and unstated) assumption that it posed great danger to the nation, and its lack of flexibility.

This pernicious assumption resulted from the perception that the superpowers had achieved atomic parity and because of this, it was "generally recognized that the danger of an all-out major East-West war breaking out. . . [was]. . . quite small."⁷³ The perceived "vulnerability of Western cities to Soviet atomic attack and of Russian cities to Western atomic attack. . . led to the conclusion that neither East nor West. . . [would] risk all-out war."⁷⁴ Amazingly enough, "the most startling deficiency of the Eisenhower administration's strategy was its bland self-confidence that it could use nuclear weapons

without setting off an all-out nuclear war." The major flaw was in the assumption that "the United States could with impunity escalate or even shift the location of the conflict, but that the other side would not."⁷⁵

Perhaps one of the most erudite critics was Bernard Brodie. To him, the "American official attitude... [seemed] to be one of ignoring Soviet nuclear capabilities as a reality to be contended with in planning." That part of the New Look "which stresses our retaliatory power is based on an assumption that is questionable... and... is bound to be ephemeral-- the assumption that we have a unique capability of destroying an opponent by strategic use of nuclear weapons."⁷⁶ The mating of emerging technology in the form of intercontinental jets and nuclear weapons was an "eruptive" event which, viewed "merely as an evolutionary development" in weapons technology approached the "absurd." Coupled with the American penchant for total wars, these "measureless forces" could not possibly be contained.⁷⁷ In the age of nuclear parity, "an unrestricted general war" meant "a catastrophe to which there are no predictable limits."⁷⁸

Another disadvantage of Massive Retaliation was its lack of flexibility. As early as 1956, the consensus among intellectuals was that "so long as no genuine reconciliation occurs between the Soviet and Western systems, American military policy will... have to deal in some way with the possibility of small-scale wars launched in the manner of the Korean attack of 1950 or developing out of guerrilla operations as in Indo-China."⁷⁹ Massive Retaliation could not cope with this style of war, for if Secretary Dulles had been unable to invoke the nuclear arm of American power to prevent a Communist victory in Indochina in 1954 "it would be far less likely to deter or cope with limited local Communist advances."⁸⁰ The reliance on nuclear weapons as the "primary instrument of deterrence" had narrowed "the range of feasible response to aggression" to such an extent that the United States was perceived as being unable to achieve its policy objectives.⁸¹ Most writers at the time felt that the solution lay in the creation of a capability to fight limited wars.

VII. The Birth of the Theory of Limited War

As Robert Osgood has written, "the western definition of limited war, like the theory reflected not some universal reality but the interests of the western allies, especially the United States, in a particular period of international conflict."⁸² Yet the difficulties faced by the theorists were complex and defied simple solutions. The public and classified literature of the period attacked a dilemma that appeared at the time "to be roughly this: to renounce war altogether as an instrument of policy, or to devise a strategy that employs select means of force (nuclear) yet skirts the contingency of mutual thermonuclear annihilation."⁸³ The main problem of the theorists in the mid-1950s, therefore, given the declared policy that nuclear weapons were to remain the basis of American military strategy, was initially to convince decision-makers and the public of the need to consciously consider how to limit war.

One student of the period has written that "by the end of 1954 . . . very little progress had been made in the attempt to explore the dynamics of *limiting warfare in the nuclear age*."⁸⁴ Much of this was due to the speed with which technological innovations were being produced. Rapid advances in technology had upset the assumptions upon which Massive Retaliation was based almost before it was announced. The rapidity with which the Soviets achieved parity in potential (as opposed to actual) capabilities "upset the Joint Chief's assumption that there would be little change over the next few years in a balance of nuclear power which had vastly favored the United States." The Soviets were able to produce an operational thermonuclear device by August of 1953 (a little over a year following the successful U.S. test) and accumulated a nuclear stockpile "more rapidly than most American experts had anticipated." They were also able to develop by 1955 a long range bomber for the delivery of these weapons and were "carrying the strategic rivalry into a new arena" through the development of ballistic missiles with an 800 mile range.⁸⁵

The introduction of the thermonuclear device posed perhaps the greatest threat to the existing perceptions of the world order. Although "fission bombs were limited enough in power to make it appear necessary to use fairly large numbers of them in order to achieve decisive results" this was not the case with the hydrogen bomb.⁸⁶ The scale of destruction that could be wrought in a war based on Massive Retaliation against a similarly armed opponent was far beyond that which had occurred using the conventional means of WWII. Unfortunately, "few persons seemed willing to think about the long-range implications of a Soviet capability until that capability was an existing reality. Until then, a plea for the study of limited war as something that might have relevance to future contingencies was likely to fall on uncomprehending ears, if not hostile ones."⁸⁷

The significance of the new weapons was, therefore, not readily apparent to all. The theorists of the time were "thus faced with the necessity of exploring the implications of the new type" when they had "not yet succeeded in comprehending the implications of the old."⁸⁸ The problem was that "no one short of the highest levels of authority can legitimately know all the important relevant facts, and... those... at those levels" were "much too preoccupied with other matters to do much thinking about the problem."⁸⁹ Yet the crucial issue was that until it was known "what it is that we want[ed] to avoid" decision makers could "hardly go about the process of avoiding it."⁹⁰

As one perceptive commentator described it, the potential for a global catastrophe was real. "Given the will, the ability seems to exist, at least on the part of the Soviet Union and the United States, to pound each other to dust."⁹¹ Although "neither East nor West is composed, so far as one can judge, of lemmings foredoomed to march to their own destruction"⁹² it was obvious that "any effort to restrict conflict must therefore provide a workable policy for keeping this extraordinary capability within the desired bounds."⁹³

The "first writer of authority to argue publicly that nuclear weapons must mean a return to limited war was the distinguished British author... Captain B H Liddell Hart."⁹⁴ His efforts did not receive much recognition until nuclear parity had been

achieved, however. Then a growing number of intellectuals joined in the fray with Bernard Brodie wielding perhaps the weightiest cudgel. To Brodie, the United States military was "tensed and coiled for total nuclear war." What was needed was "to rethink some of the basic principles (which have become hazy since Clausewitz) connecting the waging of war with the political ends thereof, and to reconsider some of the prevalent axioms governing the conduct of military operations."⁹⁵

Initially the reexamination was directed at one of the theoretical concepts underlying Massive Retaliation. Contrary to the protestations of COL Summers, the Korean experience was constantly used as an example of what a limited war might be like. Based on the experience of the West in this arena, Raymond Aron suggested that one of the first questions that should be asked is "what kind of weapons can be used in a limited conflict without provoking a general nuclear war?"⁹⁶ Up until the mid-1950s, the nuclear weapon had not posed an escalatory threat. The numbers of weapons stockpiled were so few that there was "no available alternative to a Douhet-type strategy." The thermonuclear bomb, however, "no sooner appeared than it began to be spewed forth in such numbers and began to wax so great in size" that it threatened "to go far beyond the stage that would redeem him [Douhet] from his errors. Perhaps it is threatening to destroy his philosophy with utter finality."⁹⁷ The development of truly strategic airpower in the form of long-range aircraft coupled with the destructiveness of atomic weapons meant that instead of being devoted to an action strategy, air power had to be relegated to a deterrent role. The question for the West, therefore, was "to assess how little effort must be put into it to keep global war abolished."⁹⁸ Gradually decision makers came to support such a position. This was reflected in 1957 when Secretary of State Dulles wrote an article "in which he seemed to retreat from massive retaliation at least partway... [and] argued... for more emphasis on tactical nuclear capabilities."⁹⁹

Given the slowly developing consensus that an all-out total war would be an unmitigated global disaster, the logical question to follow was how to conduct a war in the

fashion required to keep it limited. Again the theorists used the Korean experience as a starting point and the "new theory of limited war owe[d] much to the miscellaneous collection of lessons abstracted from the history of the Korean conflict"¹⁰⁰ The theory that arose was not one that can be traced by a straight-line progression of concepts, however. It was more a collection of nuggets that were washed from the intellectual stream of ideas that poured forth following Dulles' Massive Retaliation speech. In conceptual terms the discussion of limits focused on both ways and ends, with the latter being by far the most difficult to deal with in a manner that would provide a guide to practitioners.

VIII. Tentative Elements of the Theory

One of the first issues that needed to be explored was how to fight a limited war given the possibilities offered not only by thermonuclear weapons but also by the rapid increase in the availability of smaller weapons. As William Kaufmann wrote:

Nuclear weapons systems have permitted the development of a whole range of possibilities for military action, and these possibilities require both differentiation of treatment and specialization of tools. The patient, in fact, is in danger of being attacked by a number of diseases and there is no longer any sovereign remedy to cure him [such as Massive Retaliation]. To attempt to find one, or to apply indiscriminate bloodletting, will be in all probability to sign his death warrant.¹⁰¹

Two concepts were to emerge that addressed other possible uses for nuclear weapons. The first traced its roots directly to Massive Retaliation and bore the name "graduated deterrence." Paul Nitze once offered a conceptual device that is useful here for a study of the nation's policies. He claimed that there was a distinction between the "action policy" of a nation and its "declaratory policy." Although Massive Retaliation was trumpeted as the latter by American policymakers, in actuality its action policy was something different -- graduated deterrence.¹⁰² This concept involved tailoring the projected application of nuclear weapons to the importance of the objective to be achieved. The hope was that by guaranteeing an upper limit along a vertical scale of weapons use, an explosion to total nuclear war would be avoided.¹⁰³ The question that needed to be answered, however, was "which areas of the world must be protected by the threat of atomic bombing, and which are

the areas that must be defended by conventional weapons?" It was a matter of adjusting "the deterrent to the importance of the stake."¹⁰⁴ Under the Eisenhower Administration, however, United States interests throughout the world were likely candidates for the defensive employment of nuclear weapons; selective defense of specific interests was not considered.

Hand-in-hand with graduated deterrence came the concept of limited nuclear warfare. Bernard Brodie had been one of the first to see its potential.

Another large result which should flow from the continuing production and accumulation of material for nuclear weapons is the spilling over of great numbers of nuclear weapons into all kinds of tactical use. . . . Nevertheless, what we are justified in questioning is whether the real portent and extent of the forthcoming revolution in firepower on the battlefield will be appreciated in good time. . . . it nevertheless seems clear that liberal use of nuclear weapons must contribute vastly to the effective fire power of ground forces. . . . we should probably need to use nuclear weapons tactically in order to redress what is otherwise a hopelessly inferior position for the defense of Western Europe.¹⁰⁵

The theoretical possibility of using nuclear weapons "in support of land armies in Europe" at levels of violence lower than total war was thought to be a realistic one. Moreover, there was "a good chance" that "if carried out with much restraint" the limited use of nuclear weapons "would be recognized as such and not set off retaliation on a broader front."¹⁰⁶ Given that this was a reasonable assumption, the discussion turned to a consideration of the means needed to fight such a war and what limits on them would be required to keep such a war limited.

Some of the possibilities were so evident as to require only a minimal amount of presentation. Geographical limits were perhaps the simplest. As one scholar has stated "the military lesson, as it was drawn from Korea, was 'do not cross parallels'." Within a European context, this devolved into attempting to limit the types of targets to be attacked. The Douhet style concept of "city-busting" was replaced by a more abstract treatment of targets that suggested that perhaps within Europe there were gradations that could successfully be developed to limit the escalations of violence.

Other common factors of limited wars were developed from a reading of recent history. Areas involved in these types of wars were limited and definable, the contestants did not commit the total amount of military resources available to them, sovereignty was not an issue, and political factors influenced military decisions.¹⁰⁷ Gradually, however, one of the Eisenhower administration's contentions gained wide currency. "There was an assumption (which was shared by most analysts and policy-makers at the time) that there was no longer a serious danger of total war. . . ."108

Theorists were thus able to argue that "only a war between a free or would-be free nation on one side and a member of the Soviet bloc or one of its stooges on the other remains for our considerations as a type of limited war vital to our interests. . . . In other words the limited wars we are discussing are those in which international Communism controls the opposition."¹⁰⁹ The concept of limited war "thus gained wide currency in the American public debate as an alternative to massive retaliation for the defense of third [world] areas and the term . . . [became] associated with the use of limited military forces in local areas. Thus the term 'limited war' was coopted to refer to 'local limited war' or war ostensibly between the forces of the free world and those of Communism in a restricted area for less than total goals."¹¹⁰ Further debate on limited war initially took place with this as a major assumption.

In 1957, two books were released that supposedly "set the terms of discussion" for the debate during the period 1957 to 1960 on limited war.¹¹¹ These were Robert Osgood's Limited War and, what has been called "the first strategic study in American history to approach becoming a best-seller," Henry Kissinger's Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy.

Osgood highlighted in his discussion many of the points about the nation's approach to war brought out by earlier writers: the traditional American distaste for war, our tendency to allow wars to grow in violence due to our dissociation of war and politics, and our acceptance of the policy of containment on a global scale.¹¹² His work addressed limited war as a generic problem, yet covered a broad range of related issues.

Osgood's arguments concerning the nature of limited wars have been skewed by some critics, however. Stephen Rosen claims that Osgood viewed limited war as merely "part of a strategy of conflict where adversaries would bargain with each other . . . in order to achieve a negotiated settlement." Although Rosen is correct in stating that to Osgood politics was the controlling force behind military actions, he is incorrect in claiming that Osgood felt that military problems had "no place in the theory" and that domestic politics were "unimportant." ¹¹³ In reality, Osgood argued that "a measure of military success is the necessary condition for achieving the political objectives of the war" but insisted that "the most effective military measures for overcoming the enemy's resistance" were "not necessarily the most effective measures for securing the continuing ends of national policy in the aftermath of war" ¹¹⁴

This places Osgood at the confluence of the arguments against the Eisenhower Administration's military strategy. Osgood's thesis was not that military problems had no place in the conduct of a limited war but that the only "rational course" left to the nation given the technological and political realities of the period, was "to develop a strategy capable of limiting warfare and fighting limited wars successfully." This was "within America's material and spiritual resources" but only if the country's "traditional approach to war and to the use of military power was revised." ¹¹⁵

The lion's share of the responsibility for limited wars was placed upon the shoulders of the political leadership for if the "principle of political primacy" was valid "despite the considerable claims of military necessity," the "task of the statesman" was to "minimize the difficulties and maximize the potentialities of political control." ¹¹⁶ There were, however two key questions that had to be asked: how could the United States keep war limited, and how could the United States fight limited wars successfully? ¹¹⁷ Osgood spent the majority of his work addressing the first question, stressing that political objectives would determine practical limits. It was up to Henry Kissinger to develop an answer to the second

Much like other critics of the Eisenhower Administration, Kissinger argued for a different approach to policy and strategy. He articulated "with great clarity the fears and reservations that many Americans had been feeling about certain of our postwar policies and failures...our reliance on massive retaliation...and the inability to use our vast strength to achieve reasonable political objectives."¹¹⁸ The major assumption underlying his work, however, was that "for better or for worse, strategy must henceforth be charted against the ominous assumption that any war is likely to be a nuclear war." With this in mind, the conduct of a limited war in the nuclear age had "two prerequisites: a doctrine and a capability."¹¹⁹

Much of the book was concerned with laying out a tentative doctrine for the conduct of a nuclear war based on the development of small yield nuclear weapons.¹²⁰ He emphasized how this technology enhanced our ability to develop a "flexible, graduated deterrence and flexible, graduated military action." His main concern, however, was that policy and strategy find a place for the use of force in a manner less than absolute, that is that means and ways had to be tailored to political ends. Limited nuclear warfare, particularly in a European context, offered a way out.

Osgood and Kissinger apparently shared a set of assumptions that had gained acceptance among a wider audience. Both saw the existence of an international and unified Communist threat that was aggressively attempting to expand its influence. Although dangerous enough in a conventional environment, in a nuclear one, the possible consequences of conflict were frightening. Due to the revolutionary fervor of the Communist bloc and the increasing vulnerabilities of emerging nations, the likelihood of conflict was more likely to increase than decrease. It was the general consensus that the first priority of those analyzing strategic issues, therefore, was to develop the concepts needed to preclude a nuclear armageddon and then to develop the wherewithal to conduct wars at a much lower scale of violence. What is most significant about these two writers is

that they represent, to a large degree, the mainstream of the intellectual currents of thought on limited war

Shortly after the publication of these influential books Thomas Schelling's The Strategy of Conflict was released. Schelling amplified a number of thoughts that were then in vogue, particularly on the limiting process. He was more concerned, however, with the role of bargaining and negotiation in limited conflicts. Although to some his argument was an extremely sophisticated development of concepts striving to push out the frontiers of knowledge, to others it was a somewhat esoteric discussion of isolated aspects of limited war theory open to misinterpretation

One critic has claimed that Schelling argued that "the study of limited war in no way depended on any actual knowledge of war... [and that the] strategy of conflict is about bargaining, about conditioning someone else's behavior to one's own."¹²¹ This is either an exaggeration or a deliberate skewing of Schelling's approach, for what Schelling actually wrote was that "there is an important difference between the intellectual skills required for carrying out a military mission and for using potential military capability to pursue a nation's objectives."¹²² Much of the problem centered around the fact that Schelling was not using the term "strategy" as it was used in military circles. Schelling defined strategy as the search for the optimal behavior that should be adopted by a player based on the interdependence of adversaries and on their expectations about others' behavior.¹²³

By this point in time, however, the general theoretical consensus held that the theory of limited war was part of a view of "a 'strategy of conflict' in which adversaries would bargain with each other through the mechanism of graduated military responses in order to achieve a negotiated settlement..."¹²⁴ Military actions could thus be placed from least to most violent along a spectrum from which civilian policymakers could pick and choose at will

Within this framework, Schelling "sought to show how questions of conflict and negotiation were interlocked, and how the insights provided by Game Theory could turn conflict into bargaining."¹²⁵ He argued that the "study of tacit bargaining -- bargaining in which communication is incomplete or impossible, assumes importance . . . in connection with limited war."¹²⁶ This was particularly true for establishing limits, for limits on the conduct of war required "at least some kind of mutual recognition and acquiescence."¹²⁷ Moreover, he argued that it appeared to be generally accepted that "there is a rather continuous gradation in the possible sizes of atomic weapons effects, in the forms they can be used, in the means of conveyance, in the targets they can be used on, and so forth."¹²⁸ He was not a supporter of the use of nuclear weapons, however. Schelling stressed that "what makes atomic weapons different is a powerful tradition that they are different."¹²⁹ He recognized that though there were "those who consider a fireball as moral as napalm for burning a man to death" there was, nevertheless, "a worldwide revulsion against nuclear weapons as a political fact." Thus the only break along the scale of nuclear use was between use and non-use, not a flexible, sliding point somewhere along the scale of use as postulated by Kissinger.¹³⁰

The discussions of limited war during this explosion of creative thought focused on the strategic uses of power. The major concern was how to arrive at limits and only secondarily on how to achieve war aims. Even so, the treatises on war limitation left "much to be desired in our understanding of limits and the limiting process, especially in relation to the political setting of a local war."¹³¹ Schelling, however, was the only one who even attempted to develop a practical approach to conflict termination in a form that could be used by decision makers.

The only writer to approach the problems found on the battlefield was William Kaufmann. In Military Policy and National Security Kaufmann argued that there appeared to be three preconditions that were required before the enemy would accept the objectives of

the United States. The first was that the enemy had to be blocked and held on the battlefield the second, that the cost of the "blocking action" had to weigh more heavily upon him than us, the third, that whatever the mode of combat our antagonist chose, he would perceive the results of continued combat to be the same ¹³²

Kaufmann also offered "several general principles" for battlefield action. The U.S. had to aim for efficient resistance as quickly as possible while avoiding either expanding the theater of operations or types of weapons employed. Furthermore, military actions should "symbolize the intention of the United States to confine both the conflict and the issues" to "the narrowest limits commensurate with the security and tactical initiative of our forces. The military objective appeared, therefore, to be "to inflict heavy and continuing costs upon the enemy's forces" with attrition rather than annihilation being the goal ¹³³ Thus, "any decision to end the war is likely to result more from a sense of futility than from minor losses of territory..." ¹³⁴

Again, *contrary to COL Summers' protestations*, this sounds like Korea in a nutshell. Perhaps more important than the above, however, was Kaufmann's contention that the U.S. must "place our military establishment in symmetry with that of the Communist bloc" [to] enhance our bargaining power whether over substantive issues or over problems of disarmament." ¹³⁵ These suggestions were to fall on receptive ears late in the decade, but prior to that, a new crisis had to be overcome.

IX. Limited War Theory Diverted

From a distance of almost thirty years it is difficult to comprehend how the 1959 launching of the Sputnik "jolted the American psyche." One commentator likened the U.S. reaction to the WWII doggerel, "When in danger, when in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout" ¹³⁶ Nonetheless, from the "ebullient tone" of Henry Kissinger's theories of possible limited nuclear war, the country was unceremoniously shoved face-to-face with the spectre of nuclear annihilation ¹³⁷ By 1959, the thoughts of those dealing with national security issues turned once again to the problems of deterring a global catastrophe.

Two writers came to the fore in presenting the unpalatable to the citizens of the U.S. - Oskar Morgenstern and Albert Wohlstetter. Morgenstern trumpeted the fact that the Soviet nuclear accomplishments were "so formidable" that in 1959 the U.S. "was approaching a peak of danger the like of which has never been experienced by a great nation." His contention, however, was that with the proper developments in technology and strategy, this danger could be overcome. In particular he favored a further development and broadening of America's strategic nuclear arsenal.¹³⁸ Wohlstetter was more pessimistic.

In a RAND report (and its unclassified variant that made its way to the public forum) Wohlstetter attacked the commonly held assumption that the nuclear balance was stable.¹³⁹ Due to the capability implied by the Sputnik

we must expect a vast increase in the weight of attack which the Soviets can deliver with little warning, and the growth of a significant Russian capability for an essentially meaningless attack. As a result, strategic deterrence, while feasible, will be extremely difficult to achieve, and at a critical juncture in the 1960's we may not have the power to deter attack.¹⁴⁰

Nuclear deterrence of a general war was no longer automatic. Since thermonuclear weapons could give an aggressor an enormous advantage it would take "great ingenuity and realism at any given level of nuclear technology to devise a stable equilibrium" but since "this technology itself is changing with fantastic speed" deterrence would require "urgent and continuing effort."¹⁴¹ Thus, even though it appeared by mid- 1957 that the voices of those arguing for a limited war capability were finally being heard, Sputnik "dramatically [turned] the attention of American policy-makers and strategists to the new problems of global war in the missile age."¹⁴²

In a move typical of the Eisenhower administration, a civilian committee was formed to look into a number of problems facing the country. The Gaither Committee report stressed that "first priority must be given to maintaining the stability of the strategic balance. Thus just as the government was shifting to the view that the strategic balance was inherently

stable and the problem was maintaining adequate limited war forces, the administration turned back to the belief that no major shift... in defense spending was desirable "143

Concurrently with this, "the attention of most analysts turned more and more to problems of general war." As Kissinger's arguments were dissected in this new strategic context, it became apparent that they were severely flawed. Where Kissinger had assumed that the local war problem was the greatest threat faced by policymakers due to the stability of the nuclear balance, this could only be the case if a first strike could not succeed.¹⁴⁴

Moreover, as the complexities of limiting nuclear war became apparent, critics proclaimed that "if limitations are really to stand up under the immense pressures of even a 'little' war it would seem [that] something more is required than a Rube Goldberg chart."¹⁴⁵

Complicating matters even further was the Soviet view that "if nuclear weapons are present, any 'small' war will inevitably grow into a 'big' war...¹⁴⁶ Thus, "by the end of the 1950's the possibilities and perplexities of strategic nuclear warfare seemed endless... in the short space of little more than ten years, the planners and their technical collaborators had invented an essentially new mode of warfare [emphasis added]."¹⁴⁷

The outcome of the debate on limited war theory remained inconclusive. Not only were "the dynamics of escalation" hardly better understood than in the early 1950s, it was not at all clear what was meant by the term "limited war," either in a nuclear or non-nuclear sense. As one author pointed out, "under modern conditions, the Second World War, if it were to be refought, would qualify as a limited non-nuclear conflict."¹⁴⁸ The possibility of limited nuclear warfare was questionable as well, for

the idea that any rules of nuclear chivalry -- such as the designation of open cities and marginal sanctuaries proposed by some advocates of limited nuclear strategy -- could safeguard European civilization from extinction does not warrant much attention, even assuming that the belligerents could be relied upon to conduct their bouts with sportsmanlike restraint.¹⁴⁹

By 1960, therefore, the consensus among strategic thinkers was that wars could no longer be deterred by nuclear means. Strategy "could not be adapted to nuclear weapons

leisurely, or through trial and error," however.¹⁵⁰ One generally accepted doctrine for nuclear use that offered a possible solution came to be known (at least initially) as "Flexible Response."

Under the Eisenhower plans, war with the Soviet Union called for a general release of all U.S. nuclear weapons in a single "spasm" (referred to by some thinkers as a "war-gasm.")¹⁵¹ The incoming Kennedy administration saw the need to provide for a potential "so designed and controlled" that it could attack a wide range of targets in order to at least provide the administration with the ability to fight a nuclear war with one of its objectives being the limitation of world wide damage.¹⁵²

The need for conventional forces gradually came to the forefront of the security debates as well. Under Eisenhower, this arm of the military had been allowed to atrophy. Of the Army's fourteen divisions, only eleven were rated as combat effective (and were organized for nuclear conditions under the Pentomic structure). The strategic reserve, formed from the divisions that were not in Korea or Germany, consisted of one division in Hawaii and three in the continental United States.¹⁵³ Numerous smaller crises requiring the possible deployment of conventional forces abounded in the late 1950s, undermining the ideas of Massive Retaliation and deterrence through nuclear superiority at tactical levels.¹⁵⁴ The 1958 Lebanon crisis was perhaps the most visible evidence of the military's conventional impotence.¹⁵⁵

As the multiplicity of means available to decision makers grew, some began to see the role of conventional forces in a new strategic light. The concepts of graduated deterrence and the spectrum of conflict were brought together to form the "strategy of escalation."

The idea bore some similarity to a poker game. Presumably, the non-nuclear chips were the easiest ones to play; NATO therefore should have a sufficient supply of them to make a substantial ante in the event the Soviets started the game. Not only would this be a believable step; it would also commit the United States irrevocably to the play. As such, it might well act as a deterrent to Soviet action. If not, it might suffice to cause a Soviet withdrawal from the game. However, if the Soviets persisted, the United States would then have to resort to nuclear weapons, at first on the tactical level, and if that did not work, on the strategic level. The threat of a graduated use of

force, in which non-nuclear capabilities would be the leading elements, thus was the only technique that seemed applicable to the threat in Europe ¹⁵⁶

Although never formally adopted by the Kennedy administration this concept offered the potential for meeting Communist threats at levels below that of nuclear war. Thus, as the Kennedy administration came into office, three capabilities clamored for funds and attention of policy makers and strategic thinkers: strategic nuclear warfare, tactical nuclear warfare, and limited non-nuclear warfare ¹⁵⁷ Unfortunately, the arena for the interplay of funds, ideas and policies remained stable for only a brief period before yet another form of warfare burst upon the world scene

John F. Kennedy had entered office through a campaign that pledged to restore America's flawed defense policies. He had promised to reduce the "missile gap," restore America's conventional forces, and provide for greater nuclear options. In 1961, however, Nikita Krushchev gave a speech that was to have grave repercussions for the American theory of limited war. Krushchev declared that there were three possible categories of wars: world wars, local wars, and liberation wars or popular uprisings. The USSR, Krushchev trumpeted, had the capability and wherewithal to fight, and thus forestall, conflicts of the first two types. Wars against imperialism (the third type) were likely to break out in every continent, however, and Krushchev announced that the Soviet Union would support such conflicts wherever possible ¹⁵⁸

This was a bombshell for the new President. Although wars similar to this had been fought before (in Algeria and Indochina), Stalin's support for them had been tepid at best. Now, however, there appeared a "new and particularly dangerous form" of warfare. Backed by an aggressive Communist bloc and fueled by revolutionary ardor, this "para-war" or "sub-limited war" presented the U.S. "with a completely new challenge" ¹⁵⁹

The new President addressed this obstacle immediately and put "a great drive" behind a program to develop concepts and techniques to cope with it. ¹⁶⁰ The theory that gradually emerged to cope with this extension of the spectrum of conflict reflected many of the other elements of limited war theory. Military power was recognized as being of limited utility in

such a conflict as the ability of the U.S. to react to violence below the threshold of overt enemy invasion was fraught with difficulties (although it was recognized that the presence of American troops could forestall invasion).¹⁶¹ More valuable would be technical, financial, and military aid to bring about social and political evolution of the country to "remove sources of social conflict which could be exploited" by the monolithic Communist bloc's opportunism.¹⁶²

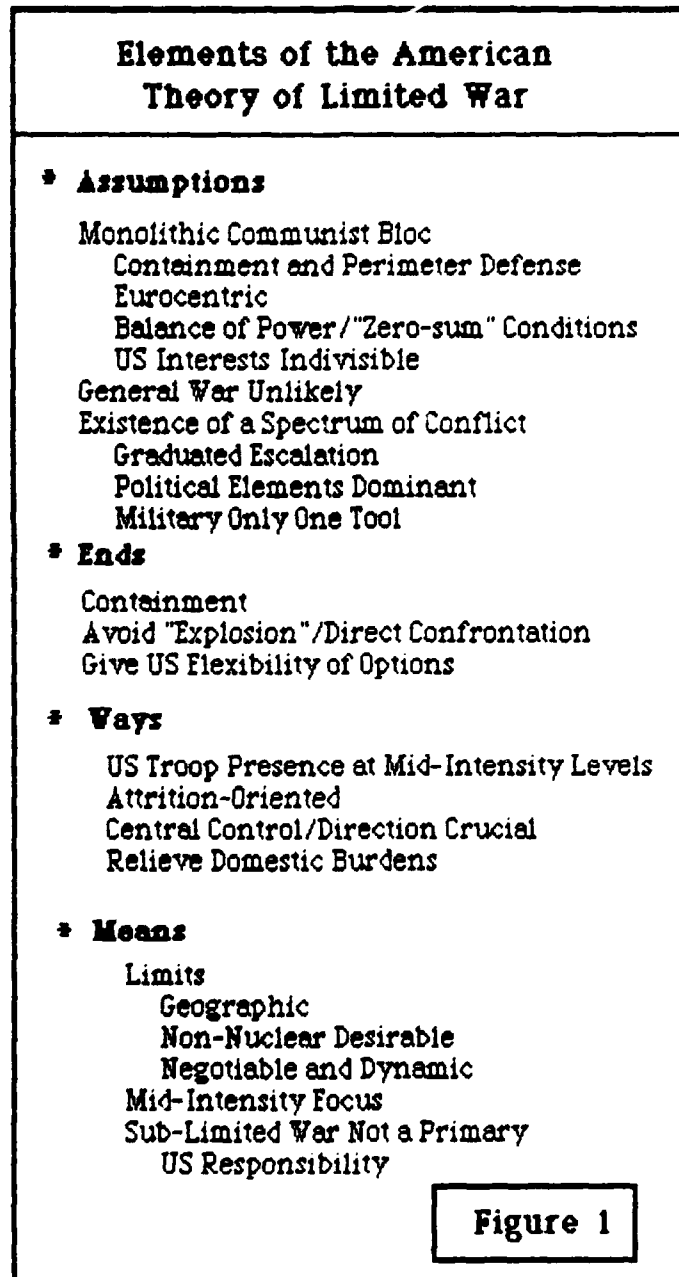
By 1962, Kennedy had made it clear in National Security Action Memorandums 124 and 182 that wars of liberation were of equal importance to conventional warfare.¹⁶³ Rather than committing U.S. troops to a battlefield of uncertain dimensions, however, according to this guidepost the U.S. would support resistance through the use of special forces who would share their expertise in unconventional warfare and nation building.¹⁶⁴ Kennedy felt, as did his advisors, that "proper support of indigenous forces on the scene would give a greater return to collective defense than additional U.S. forces."¹⁶⁵ To a large degree, the problems of wars of national liberation had supplanted the concerns of the limited war theorists. Kennedy's attention was firmly fixed to the former as he declared, "How we fight that kind of problem which is going to be with us all through this decade seems to me to be one of the greatest problems now before the United States."¹⁶⁶ As John L. Gaddis has written, the "struggle had been switched from Europe to Asia, Africa, and Latin America, from nuclear and conventional weaponry to irregular warfare, insurrection, and subversion."¹⁶⁷ Once again, the theory of limited war was diverted.

X. The Theory of Limited War -- An Analysis

There are a number of pitfalls threatening anyone who attempts to reconstruct a theory as it evolves over time. The benefits of hindsight allow an analyst to neatly build a model to support the major tenets of an argument as opposed to seeing a problem in all its complexity. This quite often leads to the portrayal of a line of thought as either black or white, omitting the subtle shades of grey that act so often as vital qualifications. With this in mind, I have

attempted to trace general trends and identify common threads that were gradually woven into the fabric of limited war. The result is the tapestry shown in Figure 1

A number of assumptions were critical to the development of this theory. Perhaps the most important and widest in its implications was the concept of a monolithic communist bloc within a bipolar world. This delineates several terms of reference from which the theory cannot escape. The need to contain the influence of the Soviet Union to



promote its disintegration led to the adoption of a concept of perimeter defence. Within this context, any gain by the Communist bloc would be a loss for the Free World and "salami-slice" tactics, the nibbling away of Western interests, had to be prevented. Since the number of influential actors was relatively small, the conflict gradually came to be seen essentially as a form of poker between two players. This, in turn, took place along a spectrum of conflict where the adversarial players would confront one another and gain or lose chips in the context of a "global game."

Given these assumptions, the ends, ways, and means of the American theory as listed were predictable. Although a general, wide ranging nuclear war between the United States and Soviet Union was considered to be unlikely, it was not viewed as impossible. How to avoid an "explosion" from a "local" conflict to a world wide one was thus a weighty consideration and an important end, second only to "Containment." Yet without the ability to flexibly apply all elements of a nation's power, these considerations would be meaningless.

This theory, like all theories, had its weaknesses. Clausewitz offers a number of illuminating thoughts about theory and its role that are applicable to this situation. The "primary purpose of any theory is to clarify concepts and ideas that have become, as it were, confused and entangled. Not until terms and concepts have been defined can one hope to make any progress in examining the question clearly." ¹⁶⁸ Moreover, the "task of theory [is] to study the nature of ends and means." ¹⁶⁹ Yet there are definite limits to what theory can accomplish. "Theory is not meant to provide . . . positive doctrines and systems to be used as intellectual tools." ¹⁷⁰ As Clausewitz's acerbic contemporary, Jomini, points out, "theories cannot teach men with mathematical precision what they should do in every case, but it is certain that they will always point out the errors which should be avoided." ¹⁷¹ The problems, however, arise when theory meets reality, for "theory conflicts with practice" ¹⁷²

Clausewitz divides "activities characteristic of war" into two categories, "those that are merely preparations for war, and war proper." Theory can be applied to both categories, yet "the theory of war, proper, is concerned with the use of these means, once they have been

developed, for the purpose of war."¹⁷³ It is easier, however, "to use theory to plan, organize, and conduct an engagement than it is to use it in determining an engagement's purpose."¹⁷⁴ It is in this translation of the means available to the ends desired that the supporters of the theory of limited war ran into difficulty.

It is easier, however, to criticize than to praise, to destroy than to create. With this injunction in mind, it is necessary to dwell on the positive aspects of the theory first before they are overwhelmed by subsequent criticism. The development of the theory of limited war was a broadly-based, interdisciplinary effort that was the subject of much heated debate. The result was an intellectual construct that imposed order upon disorder and set the terms for national security concepts that are still in use today. It addressed a wide-ranging number and types of threats, thus providing policy-makers with the ability to do what Clausewitz has claimed to be the first and foremost task of the statesman, "to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking..."¹⁷⁵ Thus the concepts and their subsequent development satisfy the "primary purpose" of a theory.

The theorists were at great pains to address the strategic uses of power. Their main concern was how to integrate military force into what had become a more deadly and far less forgiving international environment. The focus therefore was on war as a continuation of politics with other means. Moreover, they understood that the term "political war" was not an oxymoron. How to establish limits and use force in a manner that would not eclipse their goals was a crucial consideration and worthy of attention for if war was "a matter of vital importance to the State... it is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied."¹⁷⁶ They understood that wars have a dynamic all their own, and if left uncontrolled, have a tendency to escalate in terms of the amount of violence employed and the goals to be obtained. Limiting means and ways thus became a central focus of this theory, and rightly so, for as Jomini points out "although originating in religious or political dogmas, these wars [wars of opinion] are most deplorable, for they enlist the worst passions, and become vindictive, cruel, and terrible."¹⁷⁷

The recognition of the existence of Clausewitz' "paradoxical trinity" in the form of political control, primordial violence, and chance is also evident in the theory. The theory does not neglect domestic issues. The traditional American approach to war as something akin to a crusade was understood and theorists contended that it could be changed with the adoption of appropriate measures.¹⁷⁸ The emphasis merely needed to be placed on the aspect of political control to promote success. Thus, if given a "Clausewitzian Litmus Test," it would appear that the theory would pass. Unfortunately, with the administering of other tests, this does not become the case.

Perhaps one of the weakest aspects was apparent in an area where the theory received high marks -- the political use of force. Although the existence of a unified Communist threat is debatable within the context of the time, the theory is based on the assumption that rational actors operate within the international political system. Greatly contributing to the problems of the practical application of the theory was "the Russian's own inconsistency: at no point during the Cold War did their behavior oscillate more between extremes of belligerence and conciliation than during Kennedy's years in office."¹⁷⁹

The concept of conflict through bargaining between two blocs was also flawed. Bargaining "implies the ability to control precisely the combination of pressures and inducements to be applied, but that in turn implies central direction, something not easy to come by in a democracy in the best of circumstances, and certainly not during the first year of an inexperienced and badly organized administration."¹⁸⁰ It also implies the ability to identify a single threat or single actor against whom one can direct these pressures. Although the existence of a Sino-Soviet split was in evidence as early as 1960,¹⁸¹ the concept of a monolithic communism still retains some credence in the politics of the 1980s. Moreover, as the perception of the threat changes over a period of time, how does a government orchestrate the "calibration," the measured and incremental use of incentives and pressure?¹⁸² American involvement in Vietnam lasted close to twenty years. During

this period the war changed in nature from an insurgency to a conventional invasion from the north. How and where are pressures to be applied when the threat does not remain constant? Finally, given the possibility that the threat can change, how can limits be imposed that will restrain the war within acceptable bounds? In Vietnam were pressures to be applied against the North Vietnamese, Chinese, or Soviets -- or against the South Vietnamese government? With an increase in actors, the permutations and combinations of successful and unsuccessful inducements interlock in such a way as to be mind boggling yet this is characteristic of limited wars.

The role of the military in the theory is unclear as well. Although Kennedy proclaimed that the strategy of Flexible Response was "to deter all wars, general or limited nuclear or conventional, large or small -- to convince all potential aggressors that any attack would be futile -- to provide backing for the diplomatic settlement of disputes -- to insure the adequacy of our bargaining power for an end to the arms race," what military forces were to do in combat remained uncertain.¹⁸³

Most of the possible uses for the military were couched in euphemistic terms such as "successful blocking actions," or "blocking the enemy," and so on. What is missing is an understanding of Sun-Tzu's contention that "what is essential in war is victory, not prolonged operations."¹⁸⁴ It is almost as if, in a peculiarly deadly form of hubris, the theorists felt that the military aspects were self-explanatory. Take, for instance, the comments in a speech made by Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara in November of 1963:

In Greece, in Berlin, and in Cuba, Communists have probed for military and political weakness but when they have encountered resistance, they have held back. Not only Communist doctrine has counselled this caution, but respect for the danger that any sizable, overt conflict would lead to nuclear war. It would follow that no deterrent would be more effective against these lesser and intermediate levels of challenge than the assurance that such moves would certainly meet prompt, effective military response by the West.¹⁸⁵

To some extent, this is a confirmation of the contention that "in its search for a way to keep a nuclear conflict within acceptable limits of damage the Kennedy administration called upon the skills of the commander but to restrain rather than to expand battlefield

violence."¹⁵⁶ Although this neglect may appear to be a glaring oversight, the question that should be asked is who was to bring up military considerations and the peculiarities of battlefield problems. A large number of the limited war theorists had some prior military service on which to base their arguments. Yet only a very few military men attempted to discuss, address, correct, or analyze this theory in the public domain. There is a great deal of discussion of defence policy and how to cope with exigencies on the nuclear battlefield, but the questions of what military end states are required to secure political objectives rarely see light in print. The services, almost to the hilt, demonstrated a myopic concern with means over ways and ends.

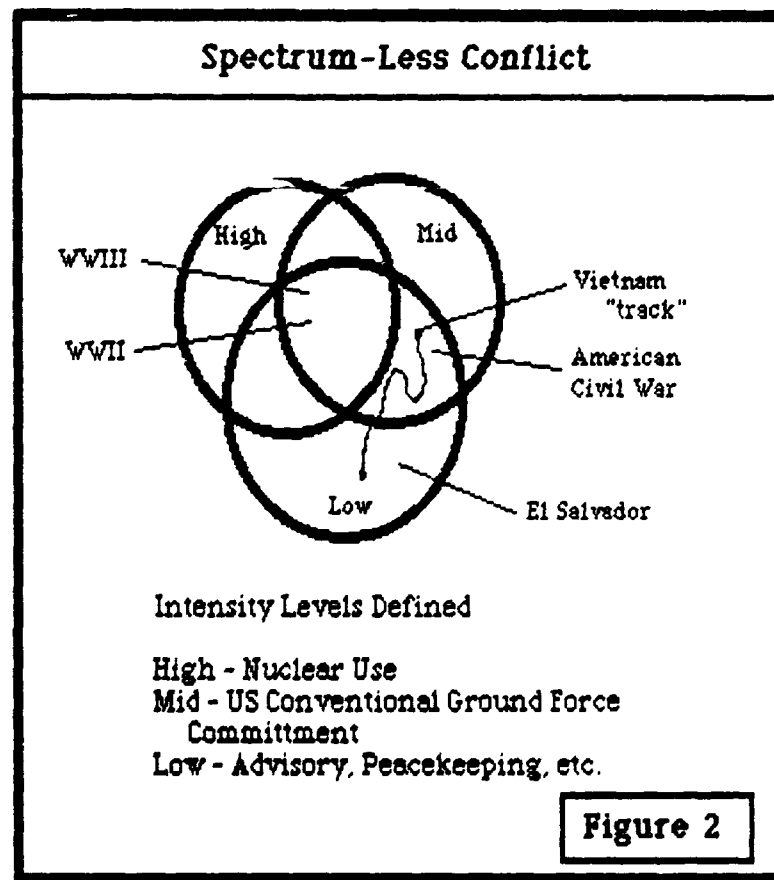
A final weakness of the theory was the generally-accepted concept of a spectrum of conflict. This retains force even today as evidenced by the following quote from AFM 1-1 Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the USAF.

Our military forces must be capable of achieving victory across a wide spectrum of conflicts or crises. This spectrum is a continuum defined primarily by the magnitude of the declared objectives.¹⁸⁷

Although the spectrum is a useful tool, its greatest value is in the activity Clausewitz calls "preparation for war." This is a neat, orderly device for illuminating the wide variety of roles that the armed forces are required to fill and graphically highlights problems that are critical in developing budgets and force structures. It fails, however, to show the complexities and chaos of warfare and gives a mistaken impression of how differing types of warfare are interrelated.

Applying the strategy of escalation along this continuum has led to the concept of "escalation dominance." This is the idea that a superiority at the highest level of force in use along the scale is the most important aspect of a conflict. Although this concept recognizes that other types of conflict may be going on, it holds that the crucial battles will take place at the highest levels of violence. Perhaps a better representation of warfare is in Figure 2, the idea of "spectrum-less conflict." From this vantage point, wars can be interpreted as being

multi-faceted, with conflicts moving and changing character with bewildering frequency as the means employed and ends sought after change. The implication of escalation dominance



is that victory can be achieved through raising the level of violence to an extreme the enemy cannot match. The suggestion of this spectrum-less conflict is that differing categories of conflict can be going on interdependent from or in conjunction with one another. Although one may not lose by escalating, one certainly may not win if other facets of the conflict are ignored.

Yet another suggestion of the spectrum of conflict is that the military capabilities of the U.S. must be placed in what John Gaddis refers to as "symmetry" with the USSR. This implies that "you neglect no capability whatsoever... [and] with respect to each capability you're almost driven to outspend the enemy appreciably because, by definition, this doctrine concedes him the strategic initiative."¹⁸⁸ The result is that "perception of means have

played a larger role than perceptions of threats in shaping U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union "189

Given the rather harsh criticism that has been heaped upon the alter of limited war theory, the question remains -- what is the bottom line? The theory is a product of its time, shaped by pressures and demands of the time often beyond the control of the framers. It has a number of glaring flaws that leap out under analysis (admittedly at the distance of some thirty years). Yet the tendency to reject it out of hand, to throw out the baby with the bath needs to be restrained. There are a number of positive elements that can be used in discussions of security issues today.

The first is the recognition that there is a multiplicity of means available to the policy makers at all levels of government that can be used in the formulation of strategies. Too often the military solution is trumpeted as the key, too often as non-applicable. When viewed as merely one aspect of an integrated approach, the benefits of the use of the military element of power can complement the effects of the others. Used alone, it may create far more problems than it solves. More importantly, the military must remain responsive to civilian control, but also adjust the manner of force application to enhance the attainment of political objectives.

The second is that containment as an element of policy has withstood the test of time. This is not a new doctrine, however, for as Jomini points out, during the French Revolution of the late 1700s, the proper actions for the European monarchies would have been to merely "contain" the revolution within France. Active intervention was not the answer for time is the remedy for all bad passions and for all anarchical doctrines. A civilized nation may bear the yoke of a factious and unrestrained multitude for a short interval; but these storms soon pass away, and reason resumes her sway "190. What has not remained valid is the concept of perimeter defense. More selectivity needs to be exercised in the selection of U.S. goals, interests, and, just as important, what sacrifices are within reason to secure them. Ways and

means must be subordinated to ends and constantly studied in the light of the dynamics of changing situations.

Finally, the process of limiting wars and their effects should still be regarded as a complex process that at times can defy solution. There are no set methods to go about limiting wars, yet some are more readily applicable than others. Geographic scale and scope are perhaps the easiest to maintain and the clearest to demonstrate. Levels of force and types of forces employed are perhaps the most probable limits that will be in use but these are the ones that are least susceptible to clear and communicable definitions.

It is apparent that the theory of limited war as developed prior to Vietnam had its limitations. Yet it set terms, developed concepts, and established the framework of the debate on security issues that continues even today. Perhaps the greatest compliment that can be paid to it and its intellectual "fathers," however, is that it helped to keep us from a Third World War. This should at least result in the awarding of a solid "Leavenworth B."

Endnotes

- 1 Robert Osgood, Limited War Revisited (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), p. 8.
- 2 John L. Gaddis, Strategies of Containment (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 237.
- 3 Osgood, Limited War Revisited, p. 33.
- 4 Harry Summers, "Vietnam: Lessons Learned and Unlearned," Art of War Colloquium (U.S. Army War College, June 1983), pp. 32.
- 5 Robert Osgood, Limited War: The Challenge to American Strategy (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957), p. 29.
- 6 Ibid., p. 15.
- 7 Morton Halperin, Limited War in the Nuclear Age (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1963), p. 19.
- 8 Gordon Craig, "The Problem of Limited War," Commentary, xxv (Feb. 1958), p. 173.
- 9 Osgood, Limited War, p. 30.
- 10 P.M.S. Blackett, Atomic Weapons and East-West Relations (Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 1.
- 11 Albert Wohlstetter, The Delicate Balance of Terror (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1958), p. 32, RAND P-1472.
- 12 Russell Weigley, The American Way of War (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc. 1973), p. 373. See also Russell Weigley, History of the United States Army (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), p. 495.
- 13 Bernard Brodie, "Unlimited Weapons and Limited War," The Reporter (November 18, 1954), p. 19.
- 14 Weigley, Way of War, p. 382.
- 15 Ibid., p. 372.
- 16 Gaddis, Strategies, p. 21.
- 17 Ibid., pp. 65-6.

- 18 Ibid., p. 23.
- 19 Ibid., p. 58.
- 20 Ibid., p. 21.
- 21 Ibid., p. 59 Halford Mackinder was an English geographer who developed around the turn of the century, the concept of the "heartland." Mackinder felt that the end of exploration was creating a closed political system in the world. Due to the changes in the relative strength of land and sea power, Mackinder claimed that the power that controlled the Eurasian land mass could possibly dominate world events as the heartland was "an ample base for land power, potentially the greatest on earth." Derwent Whittlesey, "Haushofer: The Geopoliticians," in Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler, ed. Edward Mead Earle (Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 401 and 405. NSC 20/4 stated that "Soviet domination of the potential power of Eurasia. . . would be strategically and politically unacceptable to the United States."
- 22 Ibid., p. 57.
- 23 Ibid., p. 59.
- 24 Ibid., p. 137.
- 25 This Navy vessel was designed to support high altitude aircraft capable of carrying nuclear weapons. It could have placed the Navy in competition with the primary Air Force role of strategic bombing, however. The cancellation was an attempt to maintain a previously agreed upon limitation of the roles of the various services.
- 26 Weigley, Way of War, p. 377. The first B36 flew in 1946. It carried a far greater payload of bombs than its predecessor the B29. What was important about it from a bureaucratic point of view, however, was that its range undercut the need for maintaining overseas bases. This posed an obvious threat to the need for a large supporting Army and Navy. Weigley, p. 372.
- 27 Gaddis, Strategies, p. 79.
- 28 Paul Nitze, "Limited Wars or Massive Retaliation," The Reporter (September 5, 1957), p. 40.
- 29 John L. Gaddis and Paul Nitze, "NSC 68 and the Soviet Threat Reconsidered," International Security Vol. 4, No. 4 (Spring 1980), p. 170. Paul Nitze was the Director of the Policy Planning Staff on the NSC and the individual who chaired the ad hoc committee of State and Defense representatives who drafted NSC-68.
- 30 Glenn H. Snyder, "The 'New Look' of 1953," in Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets, eds. Warner Schilling, Paul Hammond, and Glenn H. Snyder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 366.

- 31 Gaddis and Nitze, "NSC 68," p. 171.
- 32 Gaddis, Strategies, p. 239.
- 33 Weigley, Way of War, p. 382.
- 34 William Kaufmann, Planning Conventional Forces, 1950-80 (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1982), p. 2.
- 35 Gaddis and Nitze, "NSC 68," p. 170. George Kennan had argued that "two high-quality Marine divisions... would be sufficient to support the military requirement of containment."
- 36 Weigley, Way of War, p. 379.
- 37 Nitze, "Limited Wars," pp. 172 and 176.
- 38 NSC-68, April 14, 1950, p. 3-69 from "United States Objectives and Programs For National Security" in National Security Documents (USACGSC, Ft. Leavenworth, KS 66027).
- 39 Weigley, Way of War, p. 379. Although some have stated that NSC-68 "put no limit" upon recommended U.S. policies and "paid no attention" to the limitations of budgetary means "this was not the case." The framers of the document "were fully aware... of the limitations of means." The conflicts that arose were over the scale of means that were thought to be necessary. Gaddis and Nitze, p. 174.
- 40 Weigley, Way of War, p. 398.
- 41 Gaddis, Strategies, pp. 109-110.
- 42 Raymond Aron, "NATO and the Bomb," Western World (June 1957), p. 11.
- 43 Halperin, Limited War, p. 22.
- 44 Arnold Wolfers, "Could a War in Europe Be Limited," The Yale Review Vol. XLV, No. 2 (December 1955), p. 214.
- 45 Bernard Brodie, "Some Notes on the Evolution of Air Doctrine," World Politics VII, No. 3 (April 1955), p. 368-9.
- 46 "Memorandum, Subject: Review of the Uncertain Trumpet." A study prepared by the staff and faculty of the Command and General Staff College, March 29, 1960.
- 47 Halperin, Limited War, pp. 2-3.
- 48 Osgood, Limited War Revisited, p. 6.

- 49 William Kaufmann, "Limited Warfare," in Military Policy and National Security, ed. William Kaufmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 129.
- 50 Weigley, Way of War, p. 415.
- 51 Bernard Brodie, War and Politics (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), p. 114.
- 52 Weigley, Way of War, pp. 396-7.
- 53 Herman Kahn, The Nature and Feasibility of Deterrence (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1960), pp. 35 and 37, RAND P-1888-RC.
- 54 This term was first rather narrowly applied to a review of strategic plans and force requirements by the new Joint Chiefs of Staff. . . it later came to denote the substance of the whole grand strategy evolved by the administration in all its aspects. . . The New Look was both a doctrine . . . and a set of actual changes and planned changes in the military establishment." Snyder, p. 383.
- 55 Eisenhower quoted in Gaddis, Strategies, p. 135.
- 56 John L. Gaddis, "Commentary," The Second Indochina War, ed. John Schlight (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1986), p. 95.
- 57 Blackett, Atomic Weapons, pp. 19-20.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Gaddis, Strategies, p. 130.
- 60 Weigley, Way of War, p. 399.
- 61 Gaddis, Strategies, p. 161.
- 62 Ibid., pp. 147-8.
- 63 Ibid., p. 151.
- 64 Ibid., p. 161. This sounds remarkably similar to the tenets of the now-popular "Competitive Strategies" which many pundits are heralding as a "new" and "innovative" strategy and the older notion of horizontal escalation.
- 65 NSC 162, September 30, 1953, p. 4-9 from "Review of Basic National Security Policy" in National Security Documents (USACGSC, Ft. Leavenworth, KS 66027).
- 66 Weigley, Way of War, pp. 401-2.
- 67 Trumpet Review

- 68 Dulles quoted in Halperin, Limited War, p. 22
- 69 Ibid., p. 22. The use of the terms tactical and strategy together indicates a problem that plagued the national security debates. Although concepts appear to have been important, rigor in developing and holding to definitions to establish the parameters of the debate does not. This was a major problem with the concept of Massive Retaliation. Rather than being perceived as a military strategy that was part of the New Look (a policy that John Lewis Gaddis says "was an integrated and reasonably efficient adaptation of resources to objectives, of means to ends" (Gaddis, Strategies, p. 161)) it took on a life of its own and was perceived as the only option the United States had available.
- 70 Nitze, "Limited Wars," p. 40.
- 71 LTC Gerald Post, The Strategic Thinking of General Maxwell D. Taylor (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, March 3, 1967), pp. 10-11.
- 72 Gaddis, Strategies, p. 172.
- 73 Blackett, Atomic Weapons, p. 2.
- 74 Ibid., p. 9.
- 75 Gaddis, Strategies, p. 173.
- 76 Brodie, "Unlimited Weapons," pp. 17 and 19
- 77 Ibid., p. 145.
- 78 Ibid., p. 16.
- 79 William Kaufmann, "Force and Foreign Policy," in Military Policy and National Security ed. William Kaufmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 103.
- 80 Weigley, Way of War, p. 411
- 81 Gaddis, Strategies, p. 165. Robert Strausz-Hupe, "The Limits of Limited War," The Reporter (November 28, 1957), p. 30
- 82 Osgood, Limited War Revisited, p. 3.
- 83 Strausz-Hupe, "The Limits of Limited War," p. 31
- 84 Halperin, Limited War, p. 2.
- 85 Weigley, Way of War, p. 405.

- 86 Bernard Brodie, "More About Limited War," World Politics Vol X, No. 1 (October 1957) p. 113
- 87 Ibid., p. 115.
- 88 Bernard Brodie, "Nuclear Weapons: Strategic or Tactical," Foreign Affairs Vol. 32, No. 2 (January 1954), p. 218.
- 89 Ibid., p. 219.
- 90 Kaufmann, "Limited Warfare," p. 109.
- 91 Ibid., p. 111.
- 92 Kaufmann, "Force," p. 235.
- 93 Kaufmann, "Limited Warfare," p. 111.
- 94 Bernard Brodie, "Strategy Versus Tactics in a Nuclear Age," Brassey's Annual (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), footnote, p. 146.
- 95 Brodie, "Nuclear Weapons: Strategic or Tactical," p. 229.
- 96 Raymond Aron, "A Half-Century of Limited War," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Vol XII, No. 4 (April 1956), p. 102.
- 97 Brodie, "Some Notes," p. 367.
- 98 Blackett, Atomic Weapons, p. 32.
- 99 Weigley, Way of War, p. 420
- 100 Strausz-Hupe, "The Limits of Limited War," p. 31. Bernard Brodie wrote that Korea "has made it possible for many of us to think and talk about limited war who would otherwise have considered such talk utterly absurd. . . ." Brassey's Annual, p. 146.
- 101 Kaufmann, "Force," p. 242
- 102 Blackett, Atomic Weapons, p. 11.
- 103 The term "explosion" was normally used to describe an uncontrollable escalation of a small conflict into a central war. The term "central war" was at times used interchangeably with the term "general war." Although the most common use for the latter was in describing a total war between the Soviet Union and United States in which nuclear strikes on each other's homelands were part and parcel of a global conflict, the former was normally restricted to mean a war between the two antagonists that was limited but might not have involved their homelands.

- 104 Aron, "A Half-Century," p. 102.
- 105 Brodie, "Nuclear Weapons," pp. 224-8.
- 106 Wolfers, "Could a War," p. 228.
- 107 COL Thomas L. Fisher, "Limited War - What Is It," Air University Quarterly Review Vol IX (Winter 1957-8), p. 131.
- 108 Halperin, Limited War, pp. 6-7.
- 109 Fisher, "Limited War," p. 129.
- 110 Halperin, Limited War, p. 2.
- 111 Stanley Peter Rosen, "Vietnam and the American Theory of Limited War," International Security Vol. 7, No. 2 (Fall 1982), p. 83.
- 112 Weigley, Way of War, p. 412. Osgood, Limited War, pp. 28-30.
- 113 Rosen, "Vietnam," pp. 84-6.
- 114 Osgood, Limited War, p. 22.
- 115 Ibid., p. 1.
- 116 Ibid., p. 23.
- 117 Ibid., p. 8.
- 118 Gordon Dean in Henry Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy (New York: Harper, 1957), p. vi.
- 119 Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, p. 123.
- 120 Halperin, Limited War, pp. 5-6. Weigley, Way of War, p. 416.
- 121 Rosen, "Vietnam," p. 86.
- 122 Thomas Schelling, The Strategy of Conflict (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 9.
- 123 Ibid., p. 3 and footnote.
- 124 Osgood quoted in Rosen, "Vietnam," p. 86.

- 125 Charles DeVallon Dugas Bolles "The Search for an American Strategy The Origins of the Kennedy Doctrine 1936-61" Ph D dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison 1985, p 654
- 126 Schelling, Strategy, p 19
- 127 Ibid
- 128 Thomas Schelling, Nuclear Weapons and Limited War (Santa Monica, CA RAND Corporation, February 20, 1959) p 1, RAND, P-1620
- 129 Schelling, RAND, P-1620, p 6
- 130 Ibid., p 1.
- 131 Halperin, Limited War, p 11.
- 132 Kaufmann "Force," p 244
- 133 Ibid., pp 116-7
- 134 Ibid., p 246
- 135 Ibid., p 256.
- 136 Craig, "The Problem of Limited War," p 171
- 137 Weigley, Way of War, pp 426-7.
- 138 Morgenthau summarized from Weigley, Way of War, pp 430-2.
- 139 Wohlstetter RAND P-1472, p 1
- 140 Ibid., p 10
- 141 Ibid
- 142 Halperin, Limited War, p 7
- 143 Ibid., p 8
- 144 Ibid., p 7
- 145 Nitze, "Limited Wars," p 41.
- 146 Leon Goure, translator, Soviet Commentary on the Doctrine of Limited Nuclear Wars (Santa Monica, CA RAND Corporation, 1958), p 8, T-82

- 147 William Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 12
- 148 Ibid., p. 16
- 149 Strausz-Hupe, "The Limits of Limited War," p. 33
- 150 Michael Mandelbaum, The United States and Nuclear Weapons 1946-76 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. viii.
- 151 Ibid., p. 108
- 152 Kaufmann, McNamara, pp. 51-2.
- 153 Kaufmann, Planning, p. 3.
- 154 Bolles, "Search," pp. 535-9
- 155 Peter Braestrup, "Limited Wars and the Lessons of Lebanon," The Reporter Vol. XX, April 30, 1959, pp. 25-7. Braestrup claims the "top-secret" studies were "much less reassuring about our ability to stomp out brushfires." He interviewed 50 top staff and operational officers in the Pentagon and found a number of shocking problems. Eighty percent of the Navy's ships were of WWII vintage or prior and manned at eighty per cent strength. Four major ships enroute to Lebanon had breakdowns and one Marine battalion had to transfer to another transport while underway. The Tactical Air Force was as bad off. It received only six per cent of the total Air Force budget and had less than 58,000 of the service's 850,000 men. Its transports were so committed to support the Strategic Air Command that only 1200 Army troops were able to be airlifted overseas. The Civilian Reserve Air Fleet was no help either as the "Lebanon crisis came during the height of the summer tourist season."
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